

Note: The Rev. Caleb Kim will deliver the sermon below on Sunday, July 19, 2026, at 10:00 am at St. Andrew's, Fenelon Falls and via Zoom.

Title: From Stressed to Blessed: Physical Health

The Transformed Sermon Series – Part 3

Two Sundays ago, we launched our new sermon series, “Transformed,” and learned the importance of setting faith-filled goals in the seven core areas of our lives: our spiritual, physical, emotional, mental, relational, financial, and vocational health. Last Sunday, we looked at Part 2 of our series through one of the most famous parables in Scripture, “The Prodigal Son,” and studied the four practice steps to renewing our spiritual health. Today, we transition to the physical body.

Let’s be honest: nowadays, a lot of people are completely stressed out. Whether we admit it or not, we spend an enormous amount of time, money, and effort trying to relieve the pressures of daily life. As far as I can tell, our lives today feel more frantic than ever before. And it doesn’t seem to matter whether our living conditions have improved. Sometimes, I feel that those of us who have established relatively stable lives actually experience more anxiety than we did when we had less.

Take my own journey, for example. When I became independent in my early twenties, I had very little. I lacked almost everything our modern world encourages us to chase. Now, as I approach the big 6–0 in less than two years...

Pressure meets us at every stage of life. However, these tensions can actually serve a purpose: they warn us when we are drifting into dangerous territory, prompting us to seek rest in safe pastures before we lose our way. Whether we realize it or not, many of us are living under the weight of chronic stress. Numerous scientific and medical studies have proven that unmanaged stress is devastating to our physical health and deeply damaging to our brains.

Today, in Part 3 of our series, we are going to discover the spiritual antidotes to these pressures so we can honour God with our physical bodies. If you arrived today feeling a little bit tired or overwhelmed, you picked the perfect Sunday to come to church! We are going to learn the Lord’s design for physical well-being through one of the most beloved passages in all of Scripture: the Twenty-Third Psalm.

While there are many ways to explore this psalm, such as examining the six or seven promises of God, today, we are going to use a different approach. We are going to focus on the author’s bold, personal declarations. As you know, this psalm was penned by King David, who knew firsthand what it was like to run for his life, fight giants, and carry the weight of a nation.

This morning, I want us to study David’s personal “I” statements and learn how to walk in physical and mental rest before the Lord, our Shepherd. My prayer is that as we ground ourselves in these sacred principles, they will help us transition from a life of stress to a life of true, physical blessing.

Firstly, David declared, “I lack nothing” (Psalm 23:1). In this very first statement of the psalm, he boldly proclaimed God’s perfect provision on his journey of faith. Interestingly, the reason

David made this firm declaration had nothing to do with his personal wealth, his military power, or his royal background. Instead, his contentment was rooted entirely in his relationship with God as his Shepherd.

To understand the depth of this, let me share a personal observation from my own life. Almost twenty-five years ago, I worked as a volunteer in an Israeli kibbutz—a self-sustaining community—for a couple of months. During my stay in Israel, I had several wonderful opportunities to visit biblical sites. One of the places I visited was the rugged Negev Desert. Standing on a high mountain early one morning, I looked down and saw shepherds leading their flocks through the wilderness. The landscape before me was completely different from the green pastures I had always imagined. Instead, I saw a vast, rocky desert stretching as far as the eye could see.

Here in Canada, we are blessed with lush, endless green fields which animals can graze freely in open plains. But in Israel, the terrain is dry, rocky, and barren. Green doesn't grow in wide-open meadows; instead, tiny tufts of green grow in scattered patches hidden beneath and around small rocks. The sheep cannot find these spots on their own. But the shepherd knows exactly where they are, and he carefully leads his sheep from one tiny patch of grass to the next.

Knowing that background completely changes how we read this psalm. As a young shepherd boy, David would have carried the daily pressure of finding food for his flock in that harsh wilderness. Years later, as a king, he would have faced intense anxiety over providing for an entire nation. At either point in his life, David could have relied on his own strength, the support of his armies, or his royal possessions. But instead, David chose to cast his burdens onto the Lord. Because he trusted his Heavenly Shepherd to meet his needs, David was blessed rather than stressed.

So much of our stress arises when we look to people instead of relying on God. Whenever we expect others to meet our deepest needs, we set ourselves up for frustration and disappointment. We must stop placing our ultimate security in human relationships, because no human being can ever fulfill all of our expectations. Whenever you feel stress rising in your life, I want you to say to yourself confidently and courageously: "I lack nothing, because the Lord is my shepherd." Our Shepherd is going to provide. He is going to take care of you.

Scripture frequently compares us to sheep (Isiah 53:6). And in many ways, the world we live in can feel like a dry, anxious spiritual wilderness. But in our Gospel reading today, Jesus calls Himself the Good Shepherd. And the primary proof of His goodness is that He willingly laid down His life for His sheep. Because He is the Good Shepherd, He knows us intimately. He calls us by name and gently leads our anxious souls toward quiet waters.

Have you ever simply longed for someone to truly know you? I believe that is one of our deepest human desires in this busy, disconnected world. One of the most comforting ways I experience the presence of God is hearing Him speak directly to my soul: "Caleb, I know you. Let me lead you beside quiet waters." When Jesus knows your name, He knows far more than what is written on your passport. My Shepherd knows my exact needs. He knows everything about me—my silent cries for the church, my deep love for my family, my hidden worries, and my personal struggles.

This morning, I believe the Lord is speaking directly to you, calling you by your name. He is saying: "I know you. I care about the difficult circumstances you are facing right now. I will help you, I will lead you out of this valley, and I love you more than you can imagine." Friends, are you looking for someone who truly knows your name? Let us listen to the voice of our Good Shepherd. Trust Him with your physical, mental, and emotional needs today, and follow Him wherever He leads.

Secondly, David declared, "I will fear no evil" (Psalm 23:4). In this second movement of the psalm, David shifts his focus to God's absolute protection on his journey of faith. To truly understand what David is saying here, we need to look at three important details.

First, consider the shepherd's tools. In biblical times, a shepherd always carried both a rod and a staff, and they served two very distinct protective functions. The rod was a short, heavy club used to defend the sheep by driving off wild predators. The staff was a long, slender walking stick with a hook on the end, used to gently pull sheep back from dangerous ledges or rescue them from thorns.

Second, consider the geography. There are actual physical canyons in Israel that match David's description. These are incredibly deep, steep, and narrow ravines. Because the walls are so high, sunlight only touches the canyon floor for a single hour at noon. For the rest of the day, these valleys are pitched in deep, frightening darkness. Yet, shepherds occasionally had to lead their sheep through these dark canyons to reach the lush grazing fields on the other side.

Third, consider the destination. The valley was never the final destination; it was simply the path to a better place. For the sheep, this dark passage was a time to rely entirely on the shepherd's guidance and trust his protection.

Look closely at the grammar here. David says we walk "through" the valley. That single word is incredibly encouraging! Walking through a dark season is not a permanent state; it is a temporary transition. You are not moving in to live there. You are simply passing through on your way from where you were to where God is taking you.

King David walked through many dark valleys in his lifetime. As a king, he had access to every earthly security measure money and power could buy. Yet, he did not say, "I am safe because of my armies, my palace, or my wealth." Instead, he looked to his Shepherd and declared: "You are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me" (Psalm 23:4). David's confidence in God's protective shield is what kept his feet moving forward, even in his darkest moments.

Have you ever felt like you were walking through the darkest valley of your life? Perhaps you feel like you are standing in one right now. When we are in the valley, terrifying shadows seem to loom over us from every side. But I want to remind you of a simple truth about shadows: a shadow cannot actually hurt you. If a massive transport truck hits you, it will cause devastating damage. But if the shadow of that same truck passes over you, you are completely unharmed. We have all walked through painful valleys in our past. We may be walking through one today, and we will undoubtedly face others in the future. Perhaps the most difficult valley of all is the valley of grief—where the shadow of death temporarily separates us from those we love. But never forget this spiritual law: wherever there is a shadow, there must be a light nearby. To

escape the fear of the shadow, we must turn our backs on the darkness and fix our eyes on Jesus, the Light of the World (John 8:12).

So, how do we handle the enemies, the stresses, and the shadows that press in on us? The short answer is: We don't. Look at what David says next in verse 5: "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows" (Psalm 23:5). Notice that you don't fight the enemies; God prepares the feast. It takes immense faith to sit down and rest at a table when you are surrounded by battles and stress. But that is exactly what God invites us to do. We must step back, stop trying to fight in our own strength, and let God be our defender.

When we look back on our lives, we cannot help but praise our Good Shepherd. He has walked beside us and our loved ones through every treacherous path, shielding us from spiritual predators. If you trust Him today, He will continue to walk with you, using His spiritual rod and staff to defend you against every hostile environment. You are safe in His hands.

Thirdly, David declared, "I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever" (Psalm 23:6). Through this final, triumphant declaration, David acknowledges God's mighty and merciful presence throughout his entire life. Because David followed God as his Shepherd, he experienced constant protection and provision. He knew the "Immanuel" God—the God who is intimately with us.

Did you notice how beautifully David describes this companionship? He writes: "Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life" (Psalm 23:6). In the original Hebrew language, the word for "follow" is actually much stronger—it means to pursue or to chase after. David is saying that God's goodness and active love are actively pursuing him, hunting him down, from the beginning of his faith journey to the very end of his earthly race. There was never a single day when God's care was disrupted. Armed with that truth, David looked to the future not with dread, but with absolute confidence that he would dwell in God's house eternally.

When we look toward our future, we usually choose one of two paths. The first path is paved with anxiety. It constantly asks: "What if everything goes wrong?" I believe many of us—myself included—frequently fall into this trap. We look at the days ahead and let our minds drift into fearful scenarios.

Challenge it with these "what-if" questions: What if the worst-case scenario happens? What would I do then? And then, what terrible thing would happen next? How does your heart feel right now? Even a brief moment of meditating on those "what-if" scenarios instantly triggers stress, steals our peace, and tightens our chests.

Over the years, I have learned five fundamental truths about the nature of worry. First, worry is a relentless cycle. In a troubled world, it never stops feeding on itself. Two, worry starts small but grows rapidly. It begins as a tiny seed, but if left unchecked, it consumes our thoughts and eventually crushes our spirit. Three, most of our worries never actually happen. When we look back, we realize we suffered over imaginary storms. Even worse, those imagined fears robbed us of the joy and blessings of our present moments. Four, anxious thoughts are highly

contagious. They act like a quiet virus, quickly spreading panic to our families, our workplaces, and our communities. Five, very few of our worries are realistic.

But here is the good news: we do not have to carry them. We can hand every single one of them over to a sovereign God who is in complete control of our lives. This brings us to the second path—the path David took. We can only imagine the heavy burdens David carried as a king. He faced immense political pressure, military threats, and personal failures. He must have felt completely overwhelmed at times by the demanding duties ahead of him. Yet, whenever David faced a daunting situation, he intentionally shifted his focus. Instead of meditating on his problems, he meditated on God's goodness and love. Because he chose to trust in God's track record, he was able to step forward with courage, no matter how uncertain the road appeared.

As I prepared this message, I found myself reflecting on the faithfulness of the Lord in my own life. Looking back over my fifty-eight years, I can honestly stand before you today and testify that God has never once disappointed me. My family and I have walked through some incredibly dark and difficult valleys. There were times when God's provision felt delayed, or when His answers came in ways we did not expect or design. But with all my heart, I can tell you that God's timing was always perfect, and His provision was always best. He knows what we need far better than we do. Because of His everlasting goodness, Christ's sacrificial love, and the daily guidance of the Holy Spirit, I can confidently tell you that we are more than conquerors over the enemy's constant "what-if" attacks.

Friends, what will you choose today? Will you continue to paralyze yourself with "what-if" questions, or will you choose to focus on God's mighty, merciful presence? Let us hold tightly to the eternal nature of our God. In His creative power, limitless wisdom, and unfailing love, the Lord, our Shepherd, makes us lie down in green pastures, leads us beside quiet waters, restores and refreshes our weary souls, and guides us along the right paths for His name's sake. When we truly believe that His goodness and mercy are pursuing us every single day of our lives, we can face every stressful situation, overcome every fear, and walk confidently into the abundant life He has prepared for us.

To conclude, where does the real strength for our physical, mental, and emotional health come from? What truly empowers us to move forward in the transformation God desires for our lives? David's answer was simple yet profound: "The Lord is my Shepherd." The Creator of the universe was not merely distant to David—He was his personal Shepherd.

In times of crisis, when we call on the Lord and faithfully follow Him, His perfect protection, His abundant provision, and His comforting presence are promised to us. He will give them to you on every step of your journey, empowering you to walk through even the darkest valley. Only Jesus, our Good Shepherd, can adequately care for your life and the lives of the people you love. He is the One who willingly laid down His life for His sheep. He is the One who has forever conquered sin and death!

With that beautiful truth in our hearts, let us come to God this morning exactly as we are. Let us commit ourselves to following His leading wholeheartedly, moment by moment, so that we may experience the fullness of His loving care throughout our journey of faith.

Now is the time to deepen your intimate relationship with the Lord. Now is the time to rest in His mighty and merciful presence. Please carry this truth with you today: the Creator of heaven and earth is not just a shepherd in a storybook. He is your Shepherd. He is my Shepherd. He is the Shepherd of our families and our loved ones, at every single moment of every single day—constantly transforming our stressed lives into blessed lives, and guiding us into true, abundant health.

*In this sermon, I have used some material from the sermon series “Transformed: How God Changes Us” by Rick Warren, drawing on Psalm 23:1-6 and John 10:1-15.